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Self-Regulation and Online Sexual Behavior Among University Students

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Abstract

The urge of information communication technology development stimulates university students with various sexual-oriented materials and can lead them into premarital relationship. Self-regulation believed as one of the factors that help an individual to control themselves and plan action to avoid online sexual behaviour. Therefore, this research is meant to determine the level of self-regulation and online sexual behaviour, the difference of self-regulation and online sexual behaviour based on gender, and the relationship of self-regulation and online sexual among university students. The sample involved was 882 students selected using simple random sampling. Data analyses was conducted using SPSS 25.0 software. Descriptive analyses show an average level of self-regulation, while online sexual behaviour was found at low level. Inference analyses using t-test indicates differences between online sexual behaviour between male and female students, while no significant differences in self-regulations based on gender. Pearson correlation analyses founded that; self-regulation has a significance relationship with online sexual behaviour among university students. The results of this research give input to students and university to improve student self-regulation and develop rules that can control online sexual behaviour.

Keywords: online sexual behavior, self-regulation, internet, university students, gender

Introduction

Continues development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) encourages surfing on various websites and creates contact with other internet users. Internet are considered as the main source that expose pornography (Stulhofer, Busko & Landripet, 2010). A series of infographic that was released later by Pornhub Insight revealed that Malaysia ranked at number 4 in terms of the increase of porn searches on their website by 84% (Pornhub Insight, 2020).

Past research has proved that visiting pornsites encouraged sexual activity that lead to risks of baby dumpings, drugs abuse and other negative impact including pregnancy among school students. Based on World Health Organization (WHO) reports, it is estimated 16 million teenagers aged 15 to 19 years and 2.5 million under 16 years reported pregnant and delivered each year. An average of 4000 under 18 years old teens reported for pregnancy in Malaysia each year. Ministry of Health reported in 2012 to 2016, there have been 79,302 case of pregnancy of under 18 years teenagers. In 2016, Sarawak has recorded the highest case at 3396 cases. Past studies show that pregnancy among the teenagers occurs in various location and institutions, this involves few predictors that's leads to the issues. 86% of those

who visited pornography sites are men, while women are more attracted to chatrooms which later leads to having a face to face relationship (Doring, 2009).

Previous research shows that the act of surfing sexual sites and risky behaviour among secondary school students are related with low self regulation. Self-regulation should be the factor that prevent the teenagers from risky behaviour (Wiederman, Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). Elements in self-regulation could be one of the aspects that help in controlling and planning to achieve a target. According to Baumeister (1994) without self-regulations, individuals will react based on their learning and natural act.

Self-regulations are considered important when facing social problems. Online sexual behaviour can lead to other social problem among university students. Students must have their own self-regulation and making sure that their self-regulation can help them to make the right decision. Most studies reveal that students surf sexual website due to their failure to control their thinking, emotion and unwanted impulse that effects their objectives.

Moilanen (2007) focuses two aspects of self-regulation which could help students making the right decision as long-term self-regulation and short-term self-regulation. In matters related to perception on sexual risk act, short term self-regulation includes given rejection to friend's impulse simultaneously and controlling emotions when stimulated. While, a long-term self-regulation refers to how individual makes judgement, controlling emotion and making decision for a specific period not to affects their objectives.

Self-regulation considered as an important factor in behavioural studies because the past research proof its roles as a prevention factor when associated with social problems (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996) and risky behaviour (Quinn, 2010). There a lack of research related to self-regulation as free variables with behaviour of surfing sexual website in this country. Western previous research studies self-regulation as mediator for related variables (Finkenauer, Engels & Baumeister, 2005; Kahn, Holmes, Farley & Kim-Spoon, 2015; Busse, Fishbein, Bleakly & Hennessy, 2010; Traen, Hald, W.Noor, Lantaffi, Grey & Rosser, 2014). This research fills the gap of past research which relates self-regulation as variable with the act of surfing sexual website among university students.

This research is based on social cognitive theory. It is a well-known theory to media researchers since its early existance and known as social learning theory. This theory studies the changes in human behaviour due to exposure to media such as the Internet. Through reciprocal determinism process, individual who exposed to media such as internet will stimulate their cognitive to action. Media researcher acknowledged that observation on other people behaviour in the media will influence the changes towards their own behaviour (La Rose, 2002).

Social cognitive theory also popular to describe self-regulation. Bandura, (1991), describe that each individual can influence themselves to act according to their own intention. The main machanisme in self-regulation can be seen through three aspects as observation on self behaviour, decisive factor and its effects; evaluation of behaviour related to individual standard and the environment; and self-reflection. Additionally, self-observation system could provide self-diagnostic information by making observation on thinking pattern, emotional responses and reaction on behaviour. According to Bandura (1986), frequent analyses on environment and thinking with reaction, an individual can identify the significant item in social environment which leads to their behaviour. They are the one who knows how to change their behaviour and modify environment aspects indicates the self-awareness that leads to self-correction of behaviour. This means that, knowledge of self provides guide to self-regulation.

Research related with self-regulation and behaviour of surfing sexual website among public university students in this country are still low especially in Sabah. With the emergence of current technology, exposure towards internet giving a high risk of exposure to sexual content and misuse among the students.

Research Objective

The research is made to proof the relationship of self-regulation and online sexual behaviour among university students. The objectives are:

- i. To identify the level of self-regulations among students.
- ii. To identify the level of online sexual behaviour among students.
- iii. To identify the differences of self-regulations based on gender among students
- iv. To identify the differences of online sexual behaviour based on gender among students. 5. To identify the relationship between self-regulations and online sexual behaviour among students.

Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, the research questions are:

- i. What are the level of self-regulation among the students?.
- ii. What are the level of online sexual behaviour among students?
- iii. Is there any differences of self-regulation based on student's gender?
- iv. Is there any differences in online sexual behaviour based on gender among students?
- v. Is there any relationship between self-regulation and online sexual behaviour among students?

Research Hypothesis

There are three hypotheses in this research:

Ho1 There are no differences of self-regulations based on gender among students.

Ho2 There are no differences of sexual online behaviour based on gender among the students.

Ho3 There are no significant relationship between self-regulation and online sexual behaviour among students.

Research Methodology

The methodology in this research includes design, sampling and questionnaire.

Design and Sampling

This quantitative research utilise survey by distributing questionnaire to respondents. 882 students of University Malaysia of Sabah have been selected randomly to participate in this research. The sampling is based on sampling formula by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001).

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of two sets instruments. Adolescent Self-Regulation Inventory developed by Moilanen (2007) are used on Self-regulation variable. This questionnaire concerns on short-term self-regulation and long-term self-regulation among teenagers on theory that the teenagers can organize and control their emotion and long-term action to achieve their target.

This questionnaire consists of 27 items, consists of two category as short-term self-regulation and long-term self-regulation items. Short-term self-regulation consists of 13 items, while long-term self-regulation consists of 14 items.

Example of short-term self-regulation items:

1. *When I'm sad, I can usually start doing something that will make me feel better.*
2. *When I'm bored, I fidget or can't sit still.*
3. *Small problems can mislead my long-term planning.*

Example of long-term self-regulation Items:

1. *I can stay focus to my work even though it's boring.*
2. *I can stay focus to my work even though my friends are chatting.*
3. *If something isn't going according to my plans, I change my action to try and reach my goal.*

On the online sexual behaviour variable, Internet Sex Screening Test by Delmonico (2000) was used to identify online sexual behaviour among internet users. There are twenty items in the questionnaire and requires them to provide the correct answer.

The Instruments have five dimensions. First dimension are *Online Sexual Compulsivity* that measures compulsive behaviour towards sexual related material in the internet. Second dimension are *Online Sexual Behaviour-Social* that measures the tendency of involvement towards interpersonal interaction with others in the internet, such as the involvements in sex-oriented chat room. The third dimension is *Online Sexual Behaviour-Isolated* which measure tendency of involvement by oneself, such as surfing sexual-pornography websites. The fourth dimension is *Online Sexual Spending* that measure the tendency to purchase sexual materials and subscription to groups related with sexual activity. The last dimension is *Interest in Online Sexual Behaviour* that measures the tendency of using the internet for sexual intention such as bookmarking of sexual websites.

Research Findings

The findings of this research presented in descriptive analyses and inference. Descriptive analyses to identify the level of self-regulation and online sexual behaviour, min analyses and standard deviation has been used to answer the first and second research objective.

Table 1: Level of Self-Regulation and Online sexual behaviour

Variables	Level	Frequency	Percentage	Min	SD
Self-Regulation	Low	99	11.22	2.89	0.64
	Average				
	High	751	85.12		
		32	3.63		
Online Sexual Behaviour	Low	343	38.89	1.46	0.24
	Average				
	High	238	26.98		
		301	34.13		

Based on Table 1, Min score analyses for self-regulation is 2.89 and standard deviation 0.64. This indicates the overall level of self-regulation among students at public university in Sabah is at average level. 85.12% representing 751 respondents has an average level of self-regulation. 32 respondents are those with high level of self-regulation or 3.63%. the rest 11.22% or 99 respondents has low self-regulation.

Min score analyses for online sexual behaviour is 1.46 and standard deviation 0.24. the average min score indicates that online sexual behaviour is low among the respondents. 38.89% representing 343 respondents has low online sexual behaviour. Average online sexual behaviour at 26.98% or 238 respondents. While the other 34.13% or 301 respondents has high online sexual behaviour.

The finding of inference analyses to identify the level are using t-test analyses. Two hypotheses tested are identifying the difference based on gender for self-regulation and online sexual behaviour. The finding for first hypotheses is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean Difference of Self-Regulation based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	F	T	df	Sig
Self Regulation	Female	519	78.426	14.41	3.25	.972	880	.331
	Male	363	77.499	13.26				

Based on table 2, t-test comparison shows that there a no significant difference between self-regulation among female students and male students, $t(880) = .972$; $p > .05$. This means that min values of female and male students do not show significant difference in self-regulation. Thereof, the hypotheses that there is no significant difference based on gender are accepted. T-test result for the second hypotheses are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Mean Difference of Online sexual behaviour based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	F	T	df	Sig
Online Sexual Behaviour	Female	519	29.014	4.989	50.642	-2.041	880	.042
	Male	363	29.678	4.402				

T-test comparison shows that there are significant differences between online sexual behaviour of female and male students, $t(880) = -2.041$; $p < .05$. Min values of female and male students significantly shows that male students are more frequent to involve with online sexual behaviour compared to female students. Therefore, hyphothesis that there are no significant differences of online sexual behaviour based on gender is not accepted.

Further analyses are made using Pearson Correlation to determine the relationship of self-regulation and online sexual behaviour among university students. The findings are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Correlation of Self-Regulation and Online Sexual Behaviour

Online Sexual Behaviour	
Self-Regulation	-.495**
Sig.	.000
N	882

** $p < .05$

Based on table 4, the value of Pearson correlation, $r = -.495$, $p < .05$. Negative interaction showed that; the higher self-regulation, the lower online sexual behaviour. This finding proofed that there is a significant relationship between self-regulation and online sexual behaviour; therefore, the fifth hypotheses are not accepted.

Discussion

The finding of the research has shown that self-regulation has significant relationship with online sexual behaviour of the students. This finding supports the previous research by Krauss, Rosenberg and Thompsett, (2015) which indicates clear relationship between self-regulation abilities with the frequency of surfing to online sexual material such as pornography. The same finding can also be seen in Hald and Malamuth, (2008) and in some other past researchers. However, in terms of gender difference in self-regulation and online sexual behaviour, this research does not support the study made by Hosseini-Kamkar and Morton (2014) and D'Ambrosio, Donorfio, Coughlin, Mohyde and Meyer (2008). They founded that the self-regulation ability and online sexual behaviour are more frequent to female compared to male.

The findings are in line with socio-cognitive theory by Bandura, (1986) which stated that, and individual are capable of learning through observation. The advancement of internet technology, students may have easy access to online sexual material. The exposure to these material gives opportunity for the students to learn, offers and to practice it themselves.

As in Ecological Systems Theory of Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) through ecosystem, the interaction between individual and mass media such as the internet will affects their lives. In this research context, university students acquire the internet for their academic purpose. However, the internet that provides them with information they need for learning also exposed them with sex-oriented materials. Frequent offering of such materials, websites and invitation for intimate or sexual intercourse will eventually mislead the students from their goal.

The results tend to happen due to time factor which gives opportunity to the students to evaluate either to go online for sexual material, to spend money to purchase sexual offerings or not. It is related with one of the elements in self-regulation which is to delay the instinct before making any action (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991)

Implication, Limitation and Future Research

This research gives impact towards knowledge in context of self-regulation and the field of online sexual behaviour. Related previous studies such as pornography, sexual content in the internet bases on the same objectives. This study focuses to university students from two established university in Malaysia. Diversity in race, cultural and background of the respondents gives new input related to self-regulation and online sexual behaviour among public university students in Malaysia. Whereas, results that shows relationship between self-regulation and online sexual behaviour among university students in Malaysia gives a portray for the need of proactive efforts to enhance self-regulation.

The findings also give contribution to student's realization of online sexual behaviour is in not allowed as it is clearly religiously and morally wrong. The Quran as the guidance for all Muslims clearly stated that one shall not conduct sexual act outside of marriage as it is disgraceful sins. Therefore, this study gives input to students to avoid themselves from any elements that could get them near to online sexual behaviour and to improves their self-regulation.

This research findings are based on a quantitative research method. Thus, it is suggested that a research based on qualitative methods to be conducted to gain more understandings on self-regulations and to what extent it is efficient towards online behaviour. Cultural and technological development exposes students to various self-concept and environment that can affect and influence behaviour. The involvement of self-concept and environmental factor such as culture, academic and religious may be included in the future research.

Self-regulation has a significant relationship with online sexual behaviour among university students. Even though they will be the future elites, neglection of self-regulation can mislead the country development and growth. Hence, excellence in physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual aspects as

in the national education philosophy must be the pillar to student's development and practised continuously. This is to ensure that the hope that was put on the students as the catalyst in the country's growth and development in the future are not futile.

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